

So I just want you to know, these Members here, I believe in them. Nothing good I achieved, including when they were in the minority, would have been possible if it hadn't been for them. In spite of all the good things that have happened in this country, I really believe that the next 8 years can be even more exciting, even more interesting, even more productive if we just stick with the philosophy that says we want to make sure everybody has a chance, that everybody matters, and we all do better when we work together. That's basically what we Democrats believe.

And you've made it possible, if the American people stick with us, to make sure that they can continue to do their job. That is very, very important.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. in the Lafayette Room at the Hay Adams Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Ken Bentsen, chair, IMPAC 2000 National Democratic Redistricting Project; former Representative Vic Fazio; and Representative Martin Fost, chair, Democratic caucus.

Remarks at a Dinner for Hillary Clinton September 14, 2000

Thank you very much. Vernon has got this microphone here. It's not on. It's feeding to the press. And if I know Vernon, he's already fed the press, which may mean that I will get a little bit of slack from them if I say anything I shouldn't.

Let me begin by saying this is my second home. Usually, when I'm a surrogate for Hillary—and I try to do this as much as I can, because that way she can be out getting votes. I'm glad to do it, but tonight I really got the better end of the deal. Vernon and Ann have been so wonderful to us, and we have had these seven—soon to be eight Christmas Eves together, with Dwight and Toni and the rest of their family.

And he's always letting me bring all my family here. And sometimes, that's a pretty large and rowdy bunch. I have two young, impish nephews who, from time to time—[inaudible]—grandchildren. And I'm very grateful for their friendship, and I want to thank Dwight and Toni and Ann and Vernon one more time for being there for our family tonight.

We've had an interesting talk around the table tonight about everything in the wide world. But I'd just like to say a couple of things. This is a rather interesting time in my life. I'm not running for anything for the first time in 26 years. [Laughter] My party has a new leader. My family has a new candidate. I cast what may well be the last vote of a long and rich

life in my native State of Arkansas for Al Gore for President.

And Tuesday I got to vote for my wife for the first time, in a little school in Chappaqua, New York. And it was the most extraordinary experience. You know, I was happy as a kid on Christmas morning. It was amazing. We got to go in and shake hands with all the election officials. And I go into this little voting booth, and I realized what I was doing, and it was just an unbelievable feeling. So for me, personally, this is a source of great pride.

And I was very proud of her last night, because I thought she gave a good account of herself in a difficult and challenging format. It should have been difficult and challenging. These jobs are not being given away. Candidates ought to be tested. But I was very, very proud of her. And apparently, the people who saw the debate liked her pretty well, too. And I always believe you can trust the people. People almost always get it right if they have enough information and enough time to digest it. So I felt good about that.

But what I would like to say to all of you relates more to you than to her and to this campaign. I appreciate what Vernon said. I thought when I ran for President in 1991 and 1992, we needed to change not only the content of our policy but the way we did our politics and the way we related to each other as citizens. We needed to adopt a more unifying language and rhetoric and attitude toward one another,

because we're growing more diverse in a world that's growing more complicated and more interconnected. And we can't get much done if all we want to do is to figure out how to segment the election in every political season in a way that divides the American people against one another so that, hopefully, we have at least one more vote than the other side.

That's not the way the world works its best. It's not the way the best companies are run, not the way the best nonprofits are run. It's not the way people want to run their families or their communities. It's not to say that we shouldn't have vigorous debates, but I thought that the country had been disadvantaged by a harsh and exceedingly personal political style that, I thought, needed to go away for good.

So we set about trying to turn the country around and change the policy and change the politics. And the result proves that a lot of sunshine and a lot of storms have been pretty good for the American people. We'll leave it to the historians to judge how good and what role we had in it, but I feel very grateful. I have a heart full of gratitude.

But the point I want to make tonight—and we discussed this at our table—is that I think this is an election that's at least as important as the election of 1992, and in some ways it presents as big, if not a bigger challenge to people, because what you do when times are good is sometimes harder to judge than what you do when times are tough.

The people took a chance on me in 1992. And we were laughing outside, and I have no idea how many people were in that polling place. "Can I really vote for this guy? He's only 46 years old, a little State. I've never been there. I'm not quite sure, you know? They say all these bad things about him. Aw, heck, times are tough. I'm going to give him a chance." People felt, "Well, it's not that big a risk. I mean, after all, we're in tough shape here."

Now, the country's in good shape. People have a sense of well-being that they have earned. Current trends are going in the right direction. The important thing in this election, I think, is for people to be quite clear about what they want out of this and what they want for their country.

I've always believed that if we could, all of us who feel as I do, if we could just bring clarity to this election, to get the American people to sit down and take a little time to think,

"What would I like my country to look like in 10 years? What is it that I should do with this truly magic moment? What are the big challenges; what are the big problems; what are the big obstacles? What are the big changes, and who can manage them best?" I've always thought that we could all come out okay in this election, because very often, the person for whom you decide to vote depends in large measure on what you think the election is about in the first place.

So, I think the Vice President and Senator Lieberman are doing very well. I think Hillary's doing very well, but I don't think any of these elections are over yet, because I think the debate is still stewing out there. People are trying to come to grips with what it all means. I'd just like to say a couple of things, first about Hillary. One of the things that—not much gets me mad anymore, I'm feeling pretty mellow—but one of the things that still kind of steams me is when I hear somebody say, "Well, why is she doing this?" She wouldn't be doing this if she weren't his wife and the First Lady."

You can ask Vernon. The truth is, if she hadn't decided to spend the last 30 years helping me, helping other people, being a public servant as well as a private lawyer, she could have been doing this 25 years ago. She chose to be a citizen rather than a candidate. She chose to do things like be on the board of the Children's Defense Fund and found the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and start our neonatal nursery down there and be the chairman of the board of a legal services corporation before she was 30 and did other things where she could serve and not ask for anything.

This is the first time in 30 years she's ever asked anybody to do anything for her. So when people say to me—well they don't say it to me, to my face, but I hear it all the time. It's sort of—that's just not true. I've never known anybody that I thought was more qualified to serve as a Senator who wasn't one already than her, because she knows how to organize things. She knows how to get things done. She knows how to work with people who disagree with her.

She's worked for 30 years on issues that are central to this country's future, not just children and families and health care and education but also some of the big issues in New York: How

do you bring economic opportunity to economically distressed places? We had to make a living doing that in Arkansas for a dozen years.

So, I think she's superbly well qualified. She's been to all 62 counties in the State. She's the only person running, I think, for the Senate in New York this year that's done that. If you saw the debate last night, you know she's thought a lot about these issues.

But the second thing I want to say, in a larger sense, is that there are big things we know that we're all going to have to deal with as people, that our elected officials will be at the center of. We know right now we've got to deal with the aging of America, all us baby boomers retire, two people working and one person retired.

We know right now that in the world economy we live in, education is more important than ever, and we have the most diverse and largest student body we've ever had, a little picture of the changes in America. I'll just give you just a sample.

There's a new movie out starring Denzel Washington. I don't even know if its premiered yet, and it's about the integration of T.C. Williams High School and the football, over the river there in Alexandria. T.C. Williams High School today, just three or four decades later, is a magnificent school, still. It has one of the best antiviolenence programs in America, by the way, but it is part of the most diverse school district in America, where there are people from 180 different racial and ethnic groups, whose families speak over 100 different native languages, in one school district.

It's a whole different world out there. How are we going to give all these kids a world-class education? The truth is, we know how to turn around failing schools, so we're going to do it. I was at a school in Harlem, in New York, a couple weeks ago, that 2 years ago had 80 percent of the kids reading and doing math below grade level. Two years later, it has 76 percent of the kids doing reading and math at or above grade level.

This can be done everywhere in America. The question is whether we're going to do it. How are we going to do that? What should the Federal Government's role be? What should we focus on? So there are things we know. Then there are all these things that are imponderable. When will global warming change our lives? See the polar ice caps are melting? What does that

have to do with you? If you're from Illinois, what's it going to do to agriculture? Why? Will it bury the sugarcane fields in Louisiana? Now that we've saved the Florida Everglades, will they be overrun with water? How could we deal with that in ways that grow the economy and create jobs for working people, instead of take jobs away?

Don't you want somebody in the Senate and somebody in the White House that's curious and thinks about that kind of stuff? The world is growing closer together. What are our responsibilities to deal with the AIDS epidemic in Africa, growing even more rapidly in India now, and soon to have the most rapid growth of all in the states of the former Soviet Union?

What are our responsibilities for that? When you all—when new mothers can bring home their babies with a little gene card that tells them what their genetic makeup is likely to be, what their life expectancy is likely to be, and what the probability of a girl getting breast cancer in her thirties is, a little baby girl coming home from the hospital, or a man having a debilitating stroke in his forties because he's got a little genetic crook—what are our responsibilities there? How are we going to protect the privacy of that information and still get them the kind of—on the kind of regime that will be drastically minimize the chances that those bad things will happen and increase their life expectancy?

How are we going to bridge the digital divide that exists in the world so that poor kids, not just in America but all around the world, get the same chance that others do? What are you going to do if somebody decides—figures out how to get a terrorist group a biological weapon that can be carried in a plastic case that can be not—that won't be detected in airports.

Something like this could all happen. This is just some of the questions. If we had all night, I could give you a thousand questions. I think about this all the time. So, quite apart from the fact that I think we're right and they're wrong on how big the tax cut should be, whether we should pay down the debt, what's our obligation to the poor areas in America, whether we should raise the minimum wage, whether we should have the Patients' Bill of Rights, whether we should have a Medicare drug benefit, we need to elect people this year who are curious and think about the future and who have the capacity to deal with these big things

and imagine how it's going to effect our little children and grandchildren, because I'm convinced that for all the good things that have happened in the last 8 years, all the best stuff's still out there.

But I'm also convinced that the future is not about to stand still, and therefore it will be more important than ever to have people who not only have very clear and unambiguous political values and common commitments that are clear to all of us at elections but people who are really curious in the best sense and learning and flexible and care about this.

I have never known anybody that I thought had a better combination of mind and heart and of constancy and ability to work with other people than Hillary—ever—not anybody. I've never known anybody that I thought has thought about the future with a greater capacity to predict than Al Gore—not anybody.

These are not the things that you necessarily think about in political campaigns. You know, they may not—it's hard to make a 30-second ad on those two things. But I'm telling you, that's the kind of stuff we need to be thinking about, because all the best stuff's still out there, but there are a lot of profound challenges out there.

I went down to Colombia last week, and we're trying to help Colombia, and also Bolivia and Ecuador and the countries around there, you know, root out the scourge of cocaine, get the farmers to do something else for a living. Fourteen thousand kids die in America every year directly from drug overdoses, as a consequence of their drug habits.

They can lose their democracy down there. Nobody really knows exactly how to save it all, but I can tell you one thing. We won't get it done by just shouting at each other. We're going to have to work with people and think about it.

Just the last thought I'll leave you with: The most important thing about the whole human genome project to me is that the people who did it figured out, with the most sophisticated computer technology available, that we're genetically 99.9 percent the same. And that the genetic differences within different racial and ethnic groups, within the group, among individuals, are greater than the genetic differences between any two racial groups, as a profile.

There is a book that's out that I've been kind of touting lately, that I'm very interested in.

It's called "Non Zero," written by a man named Robert Wright. I don't know if any of you have seen it, but he wrote a book a few years ago called "The Moral Animal," which got a lot of interest.

Essentially, the argument of "Non Zero" is this: The world is—it is a scientific and historical argument. When Martin Luther King propositioned that the arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice, and essentially what the argument is that we have to become more just as a society, if we want to survive, as we grow more complex and more interdependent.

He's not naive. I mean, he understands that science was abused by Nazi Germany, modern organizational techniques, and military capacity was abused by communists, totalitarians, dictatorships. But he basically argues that if you look at it over the whole sweep of history, it is a good thing that we are growing, A, more complex, and B, more interdependent, because it forces us to try to find solutions in which we all win, instead of solutions in which some of us win at everybody else's expense.

As I said, he's not naive. If you have a race for President, one of these guys is going to lose, and one of them's going to win. You know, somebody's going to win, somebody's going to lose the race for Senate. But he argues that the leadership style that is required for this time is that we work together to try to find principled compromises but not say you'll split the difference. Things that are always on the edge of change, so that we can all win.

And what I've tried to do is to modernize the Democratic Party but rooted on very simple ideas: Everybody counts; everybody deserves a chance; people that need help ought to get it, to be empowered to make the most of their lives; and we all do better when we work together—very simple ideas. But you have to have people who can take those simple principles in a very complicated world and make it work for ordinary people.

I don't know anybody I think can do that better than Hillary, and I know I'm biased, because I know we spent 30 years together. I'm just telling you I've seen hundreds and hundreds of people in public life, in both parties, and most of them were better than most folks thought they were. Most people in public life I've known have been honest, hard-working, and

did what they actually thought was right 95 percent of the time. But I've never known anybody I thought could do it that well.

So I think that she would do a great job for New York, and I think she will win, only if she can continue to bring clarity to the message, and your presence here tonight and your support for her guarantees that she'll be able to be heard in her own voice, rather than somebody's clever transfiguration of it. And you should be very proud of that. I hope you'll always be proud you came to this dinner tonight.

But the stakes are far bigger than another Senate race, even far bigger than another President's race, and they are just as important, if not more important, than what we did in '92, because we now have the future to run ourselves, and we've got to do a good job of it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Vernon and Ann Jordan; and Dwight Bush, chief financial officer, Sato Travel, and his wife, Toni.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Joint Convention on Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste Management Safety

September 13, 2000

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for Senate advice and consent to ratification, the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, done at Vienna on September 5, 1997. Also transmitted for the information of the Senate is the report of the Department of State concerning the Convention.

This Convention was adopted by a Diplomatic Conference convened by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in September 1997 and was opened for signature in Vienna on September 5, 1997, during the IAEA General Conference, on which date Secretary of Energy Federico Peña signed the Convention for the United States.

The Convention is an important part of the effort to raise the level of nuclear safety around the world. It is companion to and structured similarly to the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS), to which the Senate gave its advice and consent on March 25, 1999, and which entered into force for the United States on July 10, 1999. The Convention establishes a series of broad commitments with respect to the safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste. The Convention does not delineate detailed mandatory standards the Parties must meet, but instead Parties are to take appropriate steps to bring their activities into compliance with the general obligations of the Convention.

The Convention includes safety requirements for spent fuel management when the spent fuel results from the operation of civilian nuclear reactors and radioactive waste management for wastes resulting from civilian applications.

The Convention does not apply to a Party's military radioactive waste or spent nuclear fuel unless the Party declares it as spent nuclear fuel or radioactive waste for the purposes of the Convention, or if and when such waste material is permanently transferred to and managed within exclusively civilian programs. The Convention contains provisions to ensure that national security is not compromised and that Parties have absolute discretion as to what information is reported on material from military sources.

The United States has initiated many steps to improve nuclear safety worldwide in accordance with its long-standing policy to make safety an absolute priority in the use of nuclear energy, and has supported the effort to develop both the CNS and this Convention. The Convention should encourage countries to improve the management of spent fuel and radioactive waste domestically and thus result in an increase in nuclear safety worldwide.

Consultations were held with representatives from States and the nuclear industry. There are